

Russia hails miracle after plane with 233 passengers makes emergency landing in corn field

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A view shows the Ural Airlines Airbus 321 passenger plane following an emergency landing in a field near Zhukovsky International Airport in Moscow Region, Russia August 15, 2019. (Reuters)

Moscow: Russians hailed a miracle on Thursday after a passenger plane carrying 233 people made an emergency landing in a corn field on the outskirts of Moscow after striking a flock of birds shortly after take-off.

The Ministry of Health said 23 people had suffered injuries, but that nobody had been killed when the Ural Airlines Airbus 321 came down in a field southeast of Moscow after striking a flock of gulls, disrupting its engines.

State television said the manoeuvre was being dubbed the "miracle over Ramenskâ", a reference to the district of Moscow region where the plane came down more than 1 km (0.62 miles) from Zhukovsky International Airport.

The Interfax news agency cited a source as saying one person had suffered serious injuries.

A fire fighting vehicle is parked near the Ural Airlines Airbus 321 passenger plane following an emergency landing in a field near Zhukovsky International Airport in Moscow. (Reuters)

The Komsomolskaya Pravda tabloid lauded pilot Damir Yusupov as a "hero," saying he had saved 233 lives, "having masterfully landed a plane without its landing gear with a failing engine right in a corn field."

Some drew comparisons with U.S. Airways Flight 1549 which performed a landing on the Hudson River in 2009 after striking a flock of geese.

The engines were turned off when it made the emergency landing and it also had its landing gear up, said Elena Mikheyeva, a spokeswoman for Russia's civil aviation authority.

Rescuers and firefighters are seen near the Ural Airlines Airbus 321 passenger plane following an emergency landing. (Reuters)

An unnamed passenger interviewed by state television said the plane had started to shake violently shortly after take-off.

"Five seconds later, the lights on the right side of the plane started flashing and there was a smell of burning. Then we landed and everyone ran away," he said.

The plane was due to fly to Simferopol in Crimea, the peninsula annexed by Russia in 2014.

Safety concerns have plagued Russia's airline industry since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, though standards are widely recognised to have sharply risen on international routes in particular in recent years.

- Reuters